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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

later: Miss DIOP (Senegal)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. WILLY BRANDT

1. The CHAIRMAN made a statement in memory of Mr. Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

2. Mr. OHLIN (Former Secretary of the Brandt Commission) paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Willy Brandt.

3. Mr. VERGAU (Germany) expressed appreciation for the remarks made by the Chairman and by Mr. Ohlin.

EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN COLOMBIA

4. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the Government and people of Colombia in connection with the tragic loss of life and great material damage caused by the recent earthquake.

5. Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia) thanked the Chairman, on behalf of his delegation, for his expression of solidarity in connection with the earthquake in Colombia.

AGENDA ITEM 80: PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued) (A/47/80, A/47/82-S/23512, A/47/83, A/47/88-S/23563, A/47/225-S/23998, A/47/267, A/47/268, A/47/290-S/24204, A/47/305-E/1992/96, A/47/308-E/1992/97, A/47/344, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/356-S/24367, A/47/361-S/24370, A/47/375, A/47/391, A/47/437)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (A/47/360)

Report of the Secretary-General on large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing and its impact on the living marine resources of the world's oceans and seas (A/47/487)

6. Mr. KHAN (Bangladesh) said that although it was recognized that the right to shelter was one of the fundamental rights of human beings, the vast majority of people in the developing world were without any proper shelter, and the problem was aggravated by high population growth, rural/urban migration and unplanned urbanization, which were causing a deterioration of living conditions in the cities. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had highlighted the linkage between development activities and the global environment, and the interdependence between sustainable development, human settlements and the alleviation of poverty.

(Mr. Khan, Bangladesh)

7. Provision of shelter was an essential element of human resource development. The vast majority of people in the homeless and floating population could become valuable members of the workforce if they could be given proper housing and health and educational facilities. In that respect, his Government had made a commitment to provide sustainable habitat to its population by the year 2000. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Zia, had emphasized that habitat for sustainable development had special significance for Bangladesh because of the vulnerability of its population to natural disasters, and had reiterated the importance of a concerted international effort to bring about a reduction in population growth.

8. New strategies were needed to stop the rapid deterioration of physical living conditions. Improvements in the human settlements sector would lead to economic and social progress which would be instrumental in the alleviation of poverty. To that end, much greater political, financial and technical support must be provided to the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, so that its goals could be achieved. The efforts of developing countries should be supplemented by the mobilization of new financial resources. At the same time, the cost-effective and affordable housing schemes using indigenous materials and techniques which had been successfully adopted in many developing countries could be replicated in other countries through South-South cooperation, with the support of the United Nations and international financial institutions.

9. Natural disasters took a heavy toll in many parts of the world, including Bangladesh. In that respect, early warning systems, emergency preparedness measures and strategies for post-disaster reconstruction and resettlement must be established. It was also necessary to develop indigenous capacity-building in the developing countries to deal with the question of sustainable habitat. Any global plan of action should pay due attention to those concerns.

10. Bangladesh supported the proposal, contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/360), that an international conference on human settlements should be held in 1996. It would provide a suitable forum for finding solutions to the problems that were being faced in the planning, development and management of human settlement and an opportunity to evaluate the progress made since Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. He also supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a separate preparatory committee and the idea of secretariat responsibility being entrusted to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. In conclusion, he stressed the need for concerted efforts by the international community to improve the inhuman conditions in which poor people lived in urban and rural areas. The United Nations and its relevant agencies could contribute more effectively through a more coordinated and integrated approach in that area.

11. Mr. BATA'ANISIA (Solomon Islands), speaking on behalf of the States members of the South Pacific Forum that were also Members of the United Nations, expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on the question of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing (A/47/487) and reiterated the firm opposition of those countries to that practice, which had unacceptable repercussions on the marine environment and in particular on the conservation and management of living marine resources. Long drift-nets must therefore be replaced by more selective and sustainable fishing methods which lent themselves to responsible fishing practices. The international community had taken appropriate precautionary action to deal with those problems; the members of the South Pacific Forum had played a key role in that work at all levels.

12. He drew attention to the resolutions which had been adopted by the General Assembly since the question had first been brought to the attention of the international community in 1989, particularly resolution 46/215, which provided for a 50 per cent reduction of all remaining large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, reaffirmed the need to continue to ensure that there was no further expansion of existing areas of operation of large-scale pelagic high seas drift-net fishing and established a global moratorium on all large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing by 31 December 1992. At their annual meeting held at Honiara (Solomon Islands) in July 1992, the Heads of Government of the South Pacific Forum had reiterated the call made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development for the full implementation of resolution 46/215 in order to put an end to those fishing activities. The countries of the South Pacific Forum welcomed the assurances given by key high seas fishing interests that they would abide by the deadlines laid down in the resolution, and also the reports made to the Secretary-General in that respect.

13. Recognizing that the deadline for ending drift-net fishing on the high seas was still some weeks away, the countries of the South Pacific Forum urged all countries to continue with the programmes they had established to end that type of fishing and stressed the need to discourage the practice of reflagging and to prevent rogue fishers from ignoring the international consensus and continuing to use large drift-nets. Should any evidence of reflagging or rogue activity be uncovered, strong measures should be adopted so as to ensure that the agreed international approach was not undermined. It was therefore necessary for the parties concerned to provide the Secretary-General with full information on the nature, scale and timing of reductions in pelagic drift-net fishing activity and for the Secretary-General to report again in 1993 on the progress made in implementing resolution 46/215.

14. The countries of the South Pacific Forum were concerned at the impact of pelagic drift-net fishing in all the world's oceans, particularly in the Indian Ocean, where vessels from Taiwan were involved in unregulated fishing of albacore, which could result in the depletion of stocks, as had occurred in the South Pacific, while the by-catch of Southern Bluefin tuna could undermine conservation and management efforts undertaken for that stock. As drift-net fishing was phased out in more closely regulated areas, fleet displacement to

(Mr. Bata'Anisia, Solomon Islands)

the Indian Ocean might add to the problem already evident there. Despite the two-year-old ban on drift-net fishing in the South Pacific, the countries of the region remained concerned that the practice might reappear in the future. There was a continued need for detailed information on all fishing activities, both to demonstrate that drift-netting had ceased in accordance with the agreed timetable and to facilitate management of fisheries resources. The countries of the South Pacific Forum therefore called upon all relevant fishing interests to provide information on their activities to appropriate international or regional organizations and Governments.

15. He wished to draw attention to the recent ratification by a number of countries of the Wellington Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Drift-nets in the South Pacific. The countries of the South Pacific Forum welcomed the support for the Protocols to the Convention which were open for signature and urged all countries eligible to become parties to the Convention or its Protocols to do so as soon as possible. The United Nations could play an important and practical role in addressing environmental and development problems and he hoped that the international community, in full implementation of resolution 46/215, would vividly demonstrate the effectiveness of the Organization on an issue of relevance to many of its Members.

16. Mr. KÄÄRIÄ (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that his statement would also cover agenda item 80 (Protection of global climate for the present and future generations of mankind) which was scheduled for consideration at subsequent meetings of the Committee, since there had been a growing consensus over the previous years on how to cope with specific environmental problems from the development perspective. The imperative of concerted action to prevent and contain environmental damage and to use optimally natural resources for economic development was increasingly reflected in national and international policies.

17. After briefly recalling the progress made in designing policies, programmes and plans to promote sustainable development, in particular the adoption of Agenda 21 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, he emphasized that the Nordic countries would continue their efforts to mobilize financial resources for global and national purposes along the lines proposed by them during the preparatory process for the Rio Conference.

18. The Nordic countries considered that the large number of countries that had signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change was a positive sign and hoped that the Convention could enter into force by the end of 1993. They favoured an extension of the mandate of the secretariat of the Conference during the interim period to provide for further sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. The period until the first session of the Conference of the Parties was of utmost importance and should be efficiently utilized. The secretariat should cooperate with the

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in order to obtain objective, scientific and technical information and advice. The question of financing would be crucial as the Convention entered into force. The requirements of the Convention with regard to the financial mechanism should be taken into consideration in the restructuring of the Global Environmental Facility.

19. The Nordic countries had taken numerous measures to limit concentrations of greenhouse gases and to enhance sinks and reservoirs, but the problem could only be solved through international cooperation. It was their hope that the Fourth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Montreal Protocol, to be held at Copenhagen in November 1992, would speed up international action to stop the depletion of the ozone layer.

20. In the view of the Nordic countries, the Framework Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity struck a good balance between conservation concerns and the need for sustainable management and fair sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of biological resources. In that connection, the meeting the following year of the intergovernmental committee responsible for the implementation of the Convention would be an important one. Norway was organizing an expert meeting during the first half of 1993 to prepare for further cooperation in the implementation of the Convention.

21. One of the important results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was the request for the initiation of an intergovernmental negotiating process to elaborate an international convention to combat desertification. In addressing that matter, it was vital to keep in sight the links between the environment, the economy and society. The agreed text of Agenda 21 on drought and desertification formed a good basis for further action. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a scientific panel to support and assist the negotiating committee on an international convention to combat desertification in its substantive work, and lessons should be learnt from the experience of the United Nations Conference on Desertification, held at Nairobi in 1977, whose recommendations had not been implemented to any substantial degree. While the convention should be global in nature and should create a common framework of action, a clear focus should be placed on the problems of Africa, since the widespread famine experienced in that continent was partly due to desertification. Attention should be drawn to the links between the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the proposed convention to combat desertification, and the principles agreed to in Rio in connection with further international cooperation on forestry issues.

22. With regard to environmental problems in Eastern and Central Europe, the Nordic countries were of the view that, while the main responsibility lay with the countries themselves, international cooperation was also required since, to a large extent, the environmental problems were of a transboundary nature. The Nordic countries were addressing in particular those environmental issues related to nuclear safety and waste, and called for international cooperation in that field.

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

23. With regard to the general principle of sustainable utilization of the living resources of the sea, the Nordic countries believed that Agenda 21 set guidelines for future efforts to protect those resources and the marine environment from the dangers posed by human activities. In that connection, they considered that the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic reflected, at the regional level, the concerns which had guided the elaboration of Agenda 21.

24. Given the unviability of current patterns of energy use, the Nordic countries wished to underline the need for intensified international efforts to promote the utilization of new and renewable sources of energy.

25. Agenda 21 had outlined a human settlements programme which emphasized practical ideas such as the enabling strategy, public and private sector partnership, use of indigenous materials and technology, self-reliance and capacity building, including full participation of women. The Nordic countries were looking forward to the active implementation of those recommendations by both national Governments and the international community, and particularly by the Commission on Human Settlements at its fourteenth session. A second conference on human settlements (Habitat II), planned for 1997, could be important in providing a link with follow-up activities to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the progress made in implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. As to the substance, the Nordic countries emphasized that an in-depth analysis of global trends in human settlement should be conducted, a task in which the performance indicators being produced jointly by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the World Bank could be instrumental in providing the necessary information base.

26. Miss DIOP (Senegal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

27. Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) said that Canada had recently made a submission outlining its position with respect to large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, which was annexed to the report of the Secretary-General. Canada's primary objective was to ensure the implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/215, which it had co-sponsored. It welcomed the extension of drift-net regulatory and information-gathering programmes in the North Pacific by Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan. Canada again called on all States to comply fully with the terms of resolution 46/215, and in particular the global moratorium on all large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing. In that regard, he hoped that the European Community would reconsider its decision not to implement the moratorium in the Baltic Sea and to delay its implementation in some cases in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea until January 1994. Canada also called on all members of the international community to remain vigilant, so as to ensure that the moratorium was not circumvented by the reflagging of drift-net vessels or by activities of "pirate" vessels. It requested that the Secretary-General should continue to

(Mr. Baillargeon, Canada)

monitor compliance with resolution 46/215 subsequent to the moratorium date and prepare a further report on the subject for consideration at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

28. In his capacity as a Member of Parliament from Vancouver and the international chairman of Global Parliamentarians on Habitat, he recalled that Canada had hosted the first major conference devoted specifically to human settlements. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver, had certainly helped to promote global acknowledgement of the importance of that issue. Furthermore, Canada had provided financial support to the North American and Caribbean Information Office of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) since 1980. The Canadian International Development Agency and the International Development Research Centre had provided assistance for numerous projects related to human settlements. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation had pioneered many programmes in which it had emphasized energy efficiency in housing construction.

29. The world had changed considerably since the 1976 Conference, and the need to supplement government housing initiatives with greater participation by the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the general population itself had become clear. Canada was attempting to promote such participation both domestically and through projects executed in developing countries.

30. Human settlements had emerged as one of the major issues at the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Canada fully agreed with the proposal to hold another conference on human settlements, preferably in 1996, to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the Vancouver Conference. It supported the establishment of an intergovernmental preparatory committee to organize the conference with the participation of all those concerned.

31. Mr. SINGH (India) said that the debate in the Second Committee on human settlements was important for two reasons: first, because the General Assembly must take decisions at its forty-seventh session regarding the objectives, content and scope of the proposed conference on human settlements (Habitat II); and second, because of the importance of promoting sustainable human settlement development as highlighted in chapter VII of Agenda 21 adopted at the Rio Conference.

32. Despite the achievements since the Vancouver Conference, plans to improve human settlements had met with serious difficulties, resulting for the most part from population growth and urbanization. The lack of infrastructure and safe drinking water, sewerage and sanitation affected more than half the total population in developing countries. As the Secretary-General had pointed out in his report, conventional econometric models had failed to measure correctly the economic returns on human settlement investments. His delegation shared the view that investment guidelines should reflect socio-economic realities.

(Mr. Singh, India)

33. India attached the utmost priority to the objective of providing shelter for all, and to that end, had made concerted efforts to encourage partnership between the public and the private sectors, to introduce innovative technology and building materials, to employ innovative financing methods and to use energy-saving devices. In 1991, Habitat had awarded its Scroll of Honour to the Housing and Urban Development Corporation of India. In 1992, it had awarded that honour to a reputed Indian architect.

34. Much remained to be done in the field of human settlements, as noted in chapter VII of Agenda 21. That programme advocated an "enabling approach" through which external assistance would help to generate the internal resources needed to improve the living environment of all people by the year 2000. It should be emphasized, however, that attaining the goal of providing adequate shelter for all required a much higher level of financing than was currently available.

35. Resolution 46/164 had deferred to the forty-seventh session the decision on the date, modalities, financing and other organizational aspects of Habitat II. The Chairman of the Group of 77 had stated the position of the Group, which would shortly adopt a resolution on the convening of that conference. It was important to hold the Habitat II conference in 1996, since a substantive review of the Rio Conference agreements was anticipated for 1997. Furthermore, the preparatory process should utilize fully the existing Habitat secretariat, whose performance had been admirable.

36. Mr. McDONALD (European Economic Community) said that the report of the Secretary-General indicated a high level of compliance with the resolutions concerning large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, at least as far as the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea were concerned, and noted that General Assembly resolutions 44/225 and 45/197 were implemented by Economic Community regulation 354/92, which expressly prohibited fishing by European Community vessels with drift-nets longer than 2.5 kilometres in European Community waters as well as on the high seas, with limited exceptions. He expressed surprise at the submission of Canada mentioned in paragraph 48 of document A/47/487, which had again been singled out by the representative of Canada in his statement at the current meeting. In his opinion, there were six paragraphs on the North Pacific in the Secretary-General's report that directly concerned the Canadian delegation and had not been referred to. Also surprising were the statements that the European Community would not implement the moratorium in the Baltic Sea and would delay its implementation in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea until January 1994. As there were no high seas within the Baltic Sea, it was outside the scope of the resolution, as the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission had noted and as had been reiterated in paragraph 9 of the report. Nevertheless, the European Commission had proposed the implementation of the moratorium to the Baltic Commission because, in accordance with the legislation of the European Economic Community, that moratorium applied not only to the high seas but also to internal Community waters. The International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission

(Mr. McDonald)

had not responded to that request and would reconsider the matter at its meeting in September 1993. There had been no delay in implementation of the moratorium in the Mediterranean Sea either: the moratorium had come into effect with the adoption of Community Regulation No. 345 of the previous year. There was also a reference to the use of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing in paragraph 58 of the report. Since his delegation had just received that report, it would investigate the matter thoroughly and if it was discovered that there had been any contravention the relevant procedures would be applied.

37. Mr. Piriz-Ballon (Uruguay) resumed the Chair.

38. Mr. CHEEMA (United Nations Development Programme) said that the process of urbanization had both positive and negative aspects, particularly in developing countries. On the one hand, it was obvious that the rapid expansion of large cities was essential for developing countries to achieve sustained growth coupled with social development, since 60 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) was generated in urban areas. On the other hand, it was also true that soaring population growth had led to an alarming increase in the number of households living in poverty. Indeed, inadequate infrastructure forced much of the urban population to live in slums and squatter settlements, while the problems deriving from environmental contamination, depletion of natural resources and widening regional differences continued to multiply. That dichotomous reality posed a great challenge that the second United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II) could address. That conference must serve as a forum for the formulation of a global plan of action that included commitments by participating Governments, a set of rolling programmes, indications of financial requirements and the strengthening of national and municipal institutions.

39. In accordance with the Human Development Report 1991 and its conviction that economic viability and productivity must be accompanied by social justice, ecological sustainability and popular participation, UNDP had targeted five basic urban development objectives for the decade that had begun in 1990: the alleviation of poverty, the provision of adequate infrastructure, the improvement of the environment, the strengthening of local authorities and institutions and the expansion of the role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

40. During the Fifth Programming Cycle (1992-1996), UNDP would increase its technical assistance in partnership with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Bank and other international organizations; it would build or strengthen local capacity to address problems and would use a programme approach and experiment with new approaches to improve the efficiency of its technical assistance.

(Mr. Cheema)

41. The latest UNDP urban development programmes and initiatives had emphasized the five aforementioned priority areas. The most important were: the Urban Management Programme and the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment. The former focused on working with developing countries to address problems of municipal finance and administration, infrastructure, land management, urban environment and poverty reduction. The latter focused on local initiatives, promoting dialogue between various departments and encouraging municipal authorities, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to collaborate with each other.

42. Since over 60 per cent of UNDP-funded human settlements projects were executed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), a Task Force had been established in 1989; it reviewed the coordination arrangements of ongoing programmes and determined priority areas of future concern to the two organizations. Lastly, UNDP was prepared to collaborate with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in undertaking preparatory work for the second United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II).

43. Mr. YUH (Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said, with respect to compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/215, that Canada had clearly indicated satisfaction with the extension from 1 July to 31 December 1992 of the regulatory and information-gathering programmes implemented by his Government for Korean-flagged fishing vessels that practised large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing in the North Pacific. At the end of June 1992, the Republic of Korea had already managed to reduce large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing by more than 50 per cent and currently intended to allocate more than $50 million to ships that practised that type of fishing in order to persuade them to abandon such activities altogether. Therefore, from 1 January 1993 onward, and in conformity with paragraph 3 (c) of resolution 46/215, all those who contravened the regulations in force would be liable to the penalties provided for therein. The details of the new legal provisions would be communicated to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

(e) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO MITIGATE THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES ON KUWAIT AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION RESULTING FROM THE SITUATION BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT

Draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.7

44. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.7 entitled "International cooperation to mitigate the environmental consequences on Kuwait and other countries in the region resulting from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait", which focused on economic and technical issues rather than political ones, and expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.